

# Splash of Character

At Arapahoe's Camps Sea Gull and Seafarer, kids immerse themselves in fun while learning the values of camaraderie and cooperation.

PHOTOGRAPHS: VINCE LUPO



**T**hirteen boys take their marks just off the pier at Camp Sea Gull, and on this afternoon, it's anybody's race. The day is a sailor's delight with blue skies and ideal winds of 10 knots. Drifting gently back and forth, each racer is careful not to let his Sunfish cross the invisible starting line before the whistle sounds.

The competitors take their last few seconds to assess the wind's direction and their most desired course, remembering their sailing master's key advice: "Keep your eye on the boat in front of you, and one day, you'll pass it."

## All in a Day's Play

Acclaimed for their top-notch sea programs, Camps Sea Gull for boys and Seafarer for girls are landmarks on the East Coast. The YMCA camps have thrived on the Neuse River in Arapahoe since 1948, when founders

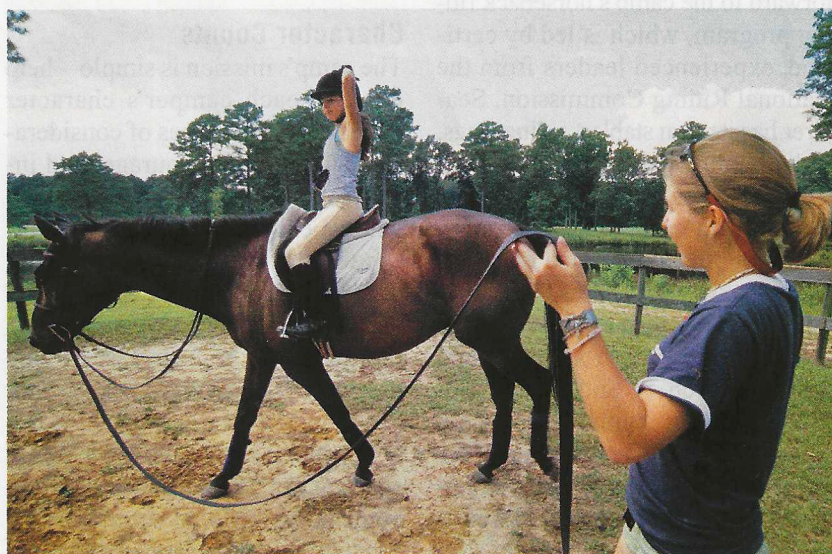
Skilled instructors at Seafarer's horseback riding program teach girls who have no experience and polish the skills of more advanced riders.

Wyatt and Lil Taylor envisioned a residential camping experience.

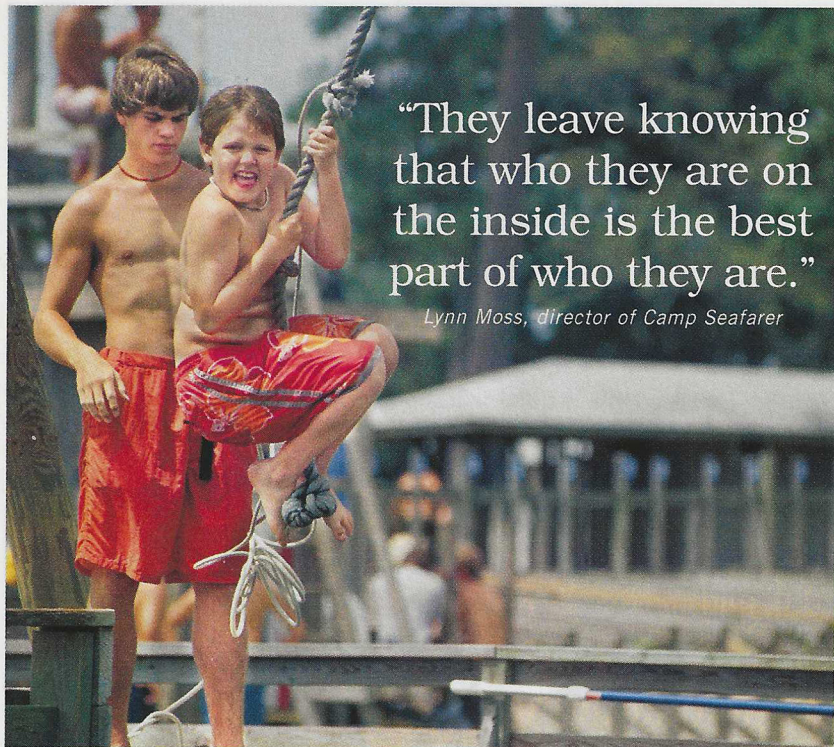
"The trend at the time was to camp in the mountains, but Wyatt saw boating as an ideal teaching tool," says Henry DeHart, director of Camp Sea Gull. "Boating is such a great metaphor for life. You don't control the wind, the waves, or the water, but how you react to them makes all the difference in the world."

At Camp Sea Gull, sailing regattas help kids master navigation and safety skills on the Neuse River.

Both Sea Gull and Seafarer boast quarter-mile-long piers for the array of boats available to the campers. From beginning sailors who learn to control a Sunfish to more advanced campers who've earned the rank of "Commodore," there is always more







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*Lynn Moss, director of Camp Seafarer*

**above:** At the lake, “general swim” gives boys plenty of time each day for splashing, sliding, and jumping.

**right:** A skilled Seafarer golf instructor helps a camper perfect her swing.

to learn. “We don’t just give rides,” says sailing master David McPhail. “We teach the kids how to develop their skills and become better sailors.”

From the pier, campers don’t have far to go to get to their favorite land activities. Many Seafarer girls look forward to the camp’s horseback riding program, which is led by certified, experienced leaders from the National Riding Commission. Seafarer has its own stables, riding rings, and schooling fields.

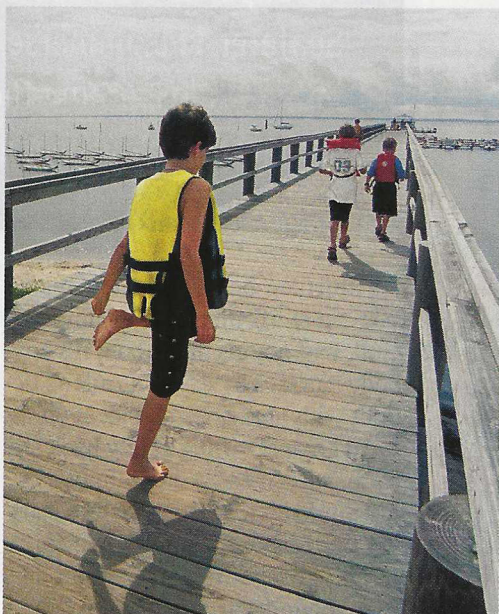
Sea Gull has a particular land lure, as well, with its 18-hole golf course. And on both camps, each of which encompasses 350 acres, there are more activities than a sports enthusiast could dream of, from tennis and soccer to archery and riflery. Not to mention the swim lakes, where campers receive lessons and take turns jumping off the “blob,” a larger-than-life, colorful raft that catapults flailing campers into the water.



### Character Counts

The camp’s mission is simple—help develop each camper’s character by teaching the values of consideration, cooperation, courage, and integrity. At the session’s end, campers who’ve exhibited those four qualities receive the camp’s highest honor: The Good Sport Award. “They leave knowing that who they are on the inside is the best part of who they are,” says Lynn Moss, director of Camp Seafarer.

Leaders at each camp agree that in addition to skill and character development, the devoted counselors set Sea Gull and Seafarer apart from



**above:** Sea Gull’s quarter-mile-long pier acts as a launching point for the several types of boats available to campers.

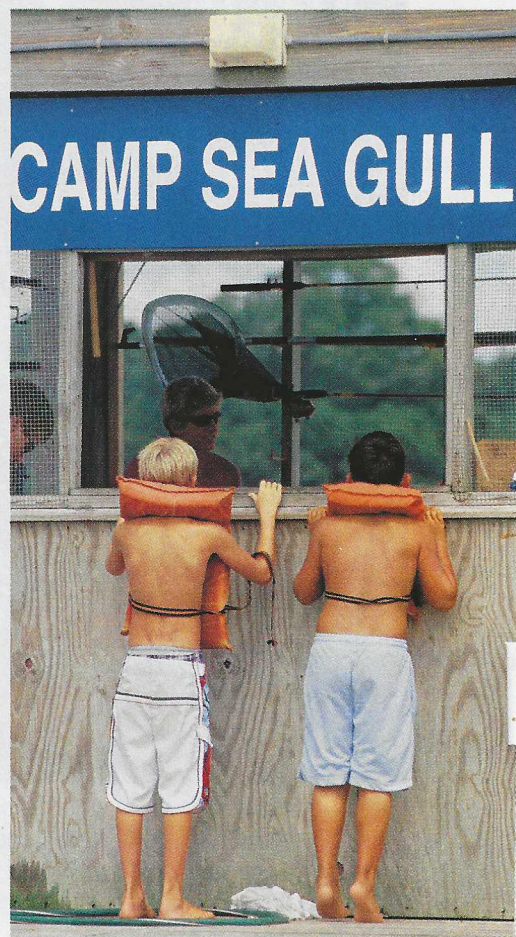
other camps. Seventy-five percent of campers return the following year, and many of those campers go on to become staff trainees, junior, and then senior counselors. The counselors have learned to use every moment with their campers as an opportunity to reinforce Sea Gull and Seafarer values. “Something as simple as eating a meal teaches campers respect for other people at the table,” Lynn says.

“It’s great to see a mom come and pick up her son,” says Travis Todd, a





**left:** With lots of encouragement and a little bit of willpower, girls at Camp Seafarer learn how to master waterskis. More advanced skiers can practice wakeboarding, kneeboarding, and slalom skiing. **below:** At the tower on the pier, Sea Gull boys check in for the latest boating news.



**above:** Tuckered-out Seafarer campers return from “Long Cruise,” their overnight trip to nearby Morehead City.

former counselor from New Bern. “She looks at him and says, ‘Oh my gosh, he’s grown so much.’ When really, he’s walking with his shoulders back and his head a little higher because of the confidence he’s gained from being here at camp.”

ROBIN SUTTON

**For more information:** Call Camp Sea Gull, (252) 249-1111, or Camp Seafarer, (252) 249-1212, or visit <http://www.seagull-seafarer.org>.

## Hailing From All Over

Inside the mess halls at Camps Seafarer and Sea Gull, flags are displayed from the countries represented by counselors and campers at each camp. “Because we have affiliations with YMCAs all around the world, we’re able to recruit staff from different national backgrounds,” says Anne Cuddy, director of marketing for the two camps. And the international campers bring their own unique experiences to the table. Between the two camps, there are campers from 43 different states, as well as from 8 other countries.

According to Lynn, “The cabin group becomes an opportunity to find common ground. Maybe there are campers with Muslim, Jewish, and Christian backgrounds in the same cabin. That gives campers an opportunity to find out what they have in common, what they can share, and what they can learn from each other.”